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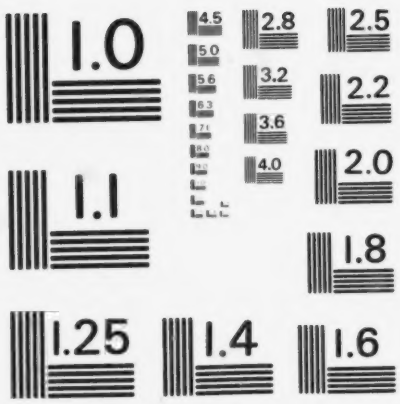

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A VALIDATION OF FOUR FACTOR ANALYTICALLY DERIVED ROLES OF THE RESIDENCE HALL STAFF

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INTRODUCTION

The professional student personnel worker or on many campuses a student staff member has replaced the once traditional resident faculty member in the residence halls of many colleges. The student staff member, often referred to as the student assistant, has become a key person in the implementation of an effective housing program. However, the effectiveness of the student assistant depends upon his role expectations as well as that of the students and the college administrators.

In an earlier study, Rankin (1967) devised a questionnaire which he used to measure the actual and ideal role of the resident counselor as perceived by several groups. Rankin's data were factor analyzed by Planisek. From this analysis a semantic model was derived which is capable of generating items for an instrument that can be used to measure perceptions of the roles of the residence hall staff.

Hence, the purpose of this investigation is to apply

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the semantic model for generating test items to residence hall students' perceived role of undergraduate hall counselors or student assistants. It is hoped that the establishment of a rating scale capable of evaluating perceived roles within and between groups will be of practical value in student personnel work.

METHOD

Role has been defined as the assigned activities of the student assistant as he attempts to fulfill the responsibilities of that position. Four roles were defined by Planisek's semantic model: administrator, advisor, counselor, and disciplinarian. Fifteen items were generated for each role resulting in a 60 item instrument.

Each respondant was asked to agree or disagree with each statement on a five point scale. The statements and scale which follow are samples of those included in this instrument:

(a) The student assistant counsels a student whose conduct is inappropriate.

(b) The student assistant knows and is able to use basic counseling techniques.

Scale:	A	B	C	D	E
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

The instrument was distributed to the students who resided in Parmelee and Braiden Halls at Colarado State University by an area coordinator for residence halls. Since these were female and male halls respectively and each proportionately represented the undergraduate class ranks and colleges, the sample of 700 seemed appropriate for this study.

Frequency distributions of responses were computed for each of the 60 statements; then product-moment correlations were computed between each pair of the 60 items. The correlation matrix was factor analyzed by the principal components method using unity in the diagonal. All factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 were rotated to the varimax criterion.

RESULTS

The area coordinator at CSU returned 250 or 35 per cent of the 700 undergraduate sample to the writers for analysis. This poor return can be attributed to an inefficient method of collecting the materials. Nevertheless, the purpose of this study is not invalidated since the sample is sufficiently large to factor analyze.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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The 5-factor solution was interpreted as follows. Factor I, Counselor, emphasized the characteristics of working with the personal problems of students; information content deals with the student gaining a deeper understanding of himself and alternative solutions to his problems; student and student assistant appear to work together in a way which is meaningful to both. This factor accounted for 37.4 per cent of the common variance.

Factor II, Disciplinarian, placed emphasis upon the characteristics of communicating rules and regulations; the

verb form is strong; the information content deals with routine knowledge and understanding of acceptable student behavior in the residence hall; the orientation is toward working with groups of students, without much interpersonal interaction between student and student assistant. This factor accounts for 19.6 per cent of the common variance.

The items with high loadings on Factor III, Administrator, emphasize the characteristics of communicating general residence hall information; the verb form of these items ranges from moderate to firm; the role is further characterized by the perfunctory or automatic response with which events and information are dealt with; the orientation is toward one-way communication of information to groups of residence hall students. This factor accounts for 19.7 per cent of the common variance.

Factor IV, Advisor, appears to possess high loadings on items containing the functions of giving aid and guidance; the verb form is moderate; information content focuses on study habits, participation in hall activities, and creation of an adequate academic atmosphere; the orientation is toward working with individuals and small groups of students. This factor accounts for 23.0 per cent of the common variance. Consequently, these five factors accounted for 99.7 per cent of the common variance.

DISCUSSION

The four factors which the analysis produced support the hypothesis that perceived student assistant roles can be

identified and measured. The principal-components factor analysis produced factors which also support a semantic model for writing items. The principal-components factor analysis produced factors into which the items, based upon their content and structure can be placed. The distinguishing characteristics among the four factors appear to be derived from the following: content of the item, strength of the item, multiplicity of concepts in the item, and degree of interpersonal relationship suggested.

Because of the general symmetry of the scale distributions on each item, Pearson r's were used for the input matrix to the factor analysis. Also, the five point scale was found to be appropriate to obtain the item variance necessary for the differentiation of individuals along these dimensions.

About 45 per cent of the items or statements were tests of a single factor, i.e., for loadings .30 or greater. Most items which loaded on more than one factor indicate that a portion of the variance of the item is correlated with other variables held in common with a specific factor. Refer to Table 1. The size of the loadings and their pattern made interpretation follow directly from the item content within each factor. Thus, naming the factors was not difficult.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this investigation was to identify perceived student assistant roles. Identification of specific sources of difference in role perception between and among groups could lead to role clarification and more efficient functioning by those who must carry out the role.

The sample consisted of 250 students attending Colorado State University during the Spring Quarter, 1969. Product-moment correlations were computed between each pair of the 60 items. The correlation matrix was factor analyzed by the principal-components method using unity in the diagonal. All factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 were rotated to the varimax criterion.

The four factor solution was as follows: Factor I, Counselor; Factor II, Disciplinarian; Factor III, Administrador; Factor IV, Advisor. These factors correspondingly accounted for 37.4, 19.6, 19.7, and 23.0 per cent of the common variance for a total of 99.7 per cent.

Hence, the results support the hypothesis that four independent roles of the student assistant can be identified. Thus, factor scores can be computed within groups and comparison between groups such as college administrators, student personnel staff, and residence hall students can be made. Understanding the differences between groups is the first step toward clarification of these roles. Clarification will increase the efficiency of the residence hall functions.

Table 1

Varimax Rotated Factor Pattern For Principal Components Analysis: Loadings > .30

Variable	Factor* I Counselor	II Disci-plinarian	III Admin-istrator	IV Advisor	h^2 [1]
1	331			-397	290
2		-699			512
3	482		307		368
4		-469		-326	342
5					102
6	508			-385	425
7	435				204
8	590				391
9	363	-463			358
10		-529			301
11		-400		-434	392
12			556	-324	420
13			331		223
14	550			-455	511
15		-543			427
16	728			-366	666
17	358		514		491
18		-431		-506	461
19	467				336
20	588				438
21		-453			219
22	472		353	-305	471
23	540				360
24		-525			366
25	367			-610	533
26	564			-364	528
27	672				583
28		-626			408
29		-345			211
30		-535			381

*The concepts of counselor, disciplinarian, administrator and advisor were identified by the investigator according to the items within the factors which most appropriately defined that particular role.

[1]The symbol "h^2" reports communality and indicates the portion of the variance of the item which is correlated with other variables held in common with a specific factor.

Table 1

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Variable	Factor I	II	III	IV	h^2
	Counselor	Disci-plinarian	Admin-istrator	Adviso:	
31	606		335		485
32			469		334
33	514				343
34	522				399
35	337				188
36	309		303		242
37	593				462
38	385		479		531
39			521		389
40			380	-316	306
41	380		361		365
42					235
43			523	-342	432
44	498			-399	500
45			307	-451	349
46	362			-613	558
47			349	-500	437
48		-643			446
49	581			-383	508
50	435		383		428
51	584		322		495
52	343			-337	343
53				-615	425
54	326			-551	471
55	507			-318	442
56	404			-378	337
57			627		471
58		-352	376		318
59	482	-308			338
60	318	-480			340

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